DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 029 EA 018 876

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TITLE Leadership Support for Staff Development: A School Building Level Model.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Improvement; *Instructional Leadership; Leadership; Participative Decision Making; *Principals; Released Time; *School Effectiveness; *Staff Development; Teacher Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS Facilitators; *Staff Development for School Improvement Program; *Wayne State University MI

ABSTRACT

Recent research shows that principals can heavily influence schools' organizational effectiveness. This report describes the instructional leadership roles of elementary and high school principals participating in the Wayne State University Staff Development for School Improvement Program (SDSI) conducted from 1981 through 1984. The SDSI school improvement model is included, along with important characteristics of staff development programs in 15 participating schools. The program is based on teachers' ability to identify their own priorities and collaborate to meet their needs--with the principal's support. Each school received modest funding to be used for staff development activities and a facilitator to guide participants through the six-step process. A recent evaluation found that at least 82 percent of the teachers in each school observed improvements in knowledge, skills, communication, and participative decision-making. Most commonly mentioned strengths were increased involvement in planning school activities and improved staff morale. Program success was greatest when activities were conducted during released time, when there was minimal staff turnover, and when support from the district and the principal was present. Included are tables, seven references, and the author's

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TITLE: LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT: A SCHOOL BUILDING LEVEL MODEL (1986)

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the instructional leadership roles of building principals who participated in the highly successful Wayne State University Staff Development for School Improvement Program (SDSI), 1981-1984. A succinct description of the school improvement model is also included as well as important characteristics of staff development programs in each of the nineteen participating elementary and secondary schools.

Currently, 15 districts are participating in the project. Each school received approximately $3,000 during the first year, $1,500 during the second year, and $500 in the final year, all to be used for staff development activities. In addition to funds, the University provided each school with a facilitator to guide the school through the six-step process.

Evaluations of the first three years of the SDSI process found that 82% or more of the teachers in each school observed improvements in knowledge, skills, communication, and participation in decision making. The two most commonly mentioned strengths of the program were (a) intensive involvement and responsibility for the planning of school activities, and (b) improved staff morale. SDSI programs were most successful when (a) activities were conducted during released-time, (b) when there were little staff turnover, and (c) when there was active district and principal support of the team's leadership role.

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT:
A SCHOOL BUILDING LEVEL MODEL

While much discussed, little is actually known about the efficacy of building-level staff development models and the role of building principals. MacKenzie's (1983) review of research for school improvement, asserts that "the question of what is important in school effectiveness may now be less significant than the question of what can be changed for the least cost and the most results". MacKenzie concludes that the greatest contemporary need is for studies that describe the role of building principals and record the process of school improvement in detail.

There is, however, persistent evidence to demonstrate a strong relationship between the building principal and the behavior of the school as an organization (Miskel, 1977; Purkey and Smith, 1982). In other words, the principal does make a difference. Although recent trends such as teacher unionization, accountability movements, parental involvement, and tenure laws may decrease some powers of the principal, instructional leadership remains a crucial factor in efforts to improve schools. As a matter of fact, the so-called "erosion of the principal's power" means that an even greater premium is now placed on the "collaborative" role of the principal. No longer can principals rule by edict; they must involve the entire staff in setting and accomplishing the school's goals. The importance of the principal's leadership has not changed, but the necessary leadership behavior is different. This is consistent with our experience in Michigan in which successful change appeared to require a strong leader in the local school, usually a principal, who acted as a catalyst to energize others (Eubanks and Levin, 1983; Hough and Urick, 1981).

This article describes the instructional leadership role of building principals who participated in the highly successful Wayne State University Staff Development for School Improvement Program (SDSI), 1981-1984. A succinct description of the school improvement model is also included as well as important characteristics of staff development programs in each of the nineteen participating elementary and secondary schools.

## THE SIX-STEP STAFF DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### Historical Background

In 1981, the College of Education at Wayne State University (WSU) received a grant from the State of Michigan to initiate a building-level staff development program that would combine the resources of the university with those of local schools to encourage teacher-directed school improvement. Nineteen elementary and secondary schools instituted the Staff Development for School Improvement (SDSI) Model in 1981, 11 others joined in 1982, and six more started in 1983. At the present time, 15 districts are participating in the project. Each school received approximately $3,000 during the first year, $1,500 during the second year, and $500 in the final year, all to be used for staff development activities. In addition to funds, the University provided each school with a facilitator to guide the school through the six-step process.

### Description of the Model

The six steps in the SDSI Model are (1) Readiness, Awareness, and Commitment, (2) Needs Assessment, (3) Planning, (4) implementation, (5) Evaluation, and (6) Reassessment and Continuation (Hough & Urick, 1981).

Step I. Readiness

To attain readiness, the facilitator meets with the principal and the staff until they understand the purpose and the steps in the process. Subsequently, questions are answered, and concerns are addressed. Finally, the staff decides by vote whether to participate in the process or not. A vote of 70 percent of the staff was required to begin a project in that building. If the staff voted to participate, a follow-up meeting was scheduled to move on to the next step.

Step II. Needs Assessment

Step Two sought to establish a building needs assessment. During the Needs Assessment Process, the facilitator leads the staff through (a) diagnosis, (b) brainstorming, and (3) prioritizing activities to select school goals. After consensus is obtained on the one or two main goals, five or more planning team members (hereinafter referred to as Building Level Team or BLT) are selected to work on the school's SDSI plan for that year.

Step III. Writing the Plan

The Third Step, Writing the Plan, is accomplished with extensive guidance from the university facilitator and support from the building principal. The plan includes (a) specific objectives related to the goal, (b) activities to be completed, (c) persons responsible for each activity, evaluation plans for each objective, and (d) the cost of each activity. The initial draft of the plan was then discussed, modified, and approved by the school staff. Finally, WSU project staff members examined the plans, modified them as necessary, discussed them, and finally approved them.

Step IV. Implementation

The Fourth Step, Implementation of the Plan, is executed and coordinated by a building level team made up of staff members, including the principal. The staff development activities usually included school visitations, workshops, classroom observations, student reward systems, curriculum development by committees, conferences, and materials preparation. Table I shows the grade level, type of community served, approximate number of students and professional staff, and goals chosen by project's schools.

Step V. Evaluation

The Fifth Step in the SDSI process is Evaluation, where formative (including implementation evaluation) and summative data are collected to monitor progress toward the school's goal.

Step VI. Reassessment and Continuation

The final step, Reassessment and Continuation, involved the facilitator and school staff in an examination of accomplishments during the year. Following that, attention was given to what they would like to focus on the following year -- in essence, a more precise needs assessment for year two. In this step, one or two members of the building level team are often replaced by newly elected staff members to provide opportunity to develop their leadership skills. Finally, a revised or new plan is developed for the next year and submitted to the staff and WSU for approval. The following year begins with the implementation of the new plan.

## DOES THE MODEL WORK?

Evaluations of the first three years of the SDSI process found that 82%

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS IN CYCLE I

| School Identification | Level | Community | Number of Professional Staff | Number of Students | Goal(s) Chosen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Elementary | Urban | 26 | 650 | *1 - Micro-computer Technology.<br>Grade-level promotion standards.<br>2 - Computer.<br>Exit minimum skills.<br>3 - Exiting skills |
| 02 | Elementary | Urban | 24 | 467 | 1 - "Workshop Way." Philosophy, reading, math, phonics, self-concept; workshop schedule, and homework.<br>2 - Computer.<br>Workshop Way.<br>3 - Workshop Way |
| 03 | Elementary | Urban | 23 | 400 | 1 - Develop a Center Philosophical Statement.<br>2 - Develop a Center Philosophical Statement.<br>3 - Classroom management/Curriculum |
| 04 | Elementary | Urban | 29 | 760 | 1 - Improve student behavior.<br>Create a positive school climate.<br>2 - School Climate.<br>Computer.<br>3 - Student Achievement/Discipline/Computers |
| 05 | Elementary | Urban | 28 | 783 | 1 - Uplift staff morale by reducing paperwork and improving student discipline.<br>2 - Assertive Discipline.<br>Analysis Reader/Math.<br>3 - Effective Teaching/Discipline |
| 06 | Elementary | Urban | 6 | 180 | 1 - Learn about computers.<br>Improve Science program.<br>2 - Science.<br>Computer<br>3 - Science<br>Computer |

*The "1" indicates goals for 1982-83.
The "2" indicates goals for 1983-84.
The "3" indicates goals for 1984-85.

TABLE I: CYCLE I (continued)

| School Identification | Level | Community | Number of Professional Staff | Number of Students | Goal(s) Chosen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 07 | Elementary | Suburban | 16 | - | 1 - To maintain focus on the establishment of a variety of approaches.<br>Learn about computers.<br>Language development.<br>2 - Math Instruction.<br>Computer.<br>3 - Instruction/Computer/Learning Styles |
| 08 | Elementary | Urban | 12 | 274 | 1 - Revise the curriculum to improve achievement levels and test scores.<br>Effective teaching.<br>2 - Math (MEAM).<br>Achievement.<br>3 - Stress/Thinking |
| 09 | High School | Urban | 92 | 1,584 | 1 - Resolve inter-personal communication problems within the school.<br>Improve the quality of work life.<br>2 - Observe school operations.<br>Educational excellence.<br>Communication |
| 11 | Middle | Suburban | 26 | 591 | 1 - Transition to new assignments.<br>Communication.<br>2 - Computer literacy.<br>3 - Writing/Handbook |
| | | | | | |

TABLE I: CYCLE I (continued)

| School Identification | Level | Community | Number of Professional Staff | Number of Students | Goal(s) Chosen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Elementary | Suburban | 13 | 367 | 1 - Conflict resolution.<br>Organizational problem solving.<br>2 - Math enrichment.<br>3 - Writing |
| 13 | Elementary | Suburban | 22 | 352 | 1 - Improving communication.<br>Awareness of current research on teacher effectiveness<br>2 - Objective testing.<br>Report cards.<br>3 - Computer. |
| 16 | Junior H.S. | Suburban | 24 | 629 | 1 - Communication.<br>School Discipline.<br>2 - Communication.<br>Discipline.<br>3 - Quality of Work life/Student behavior/Progress reports |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

TABLE I: CYCLE I (continued)

| School Identification | Level | Community | Number of Professional Staff | Number of Students | Goal(s) Chosen |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | Junior H.S. | Suburban | 25 | 626 | 1 - Develop a cohesive and cooperative staff in order to implement the middle school concept.<br>2 - Middle School philosophy.<br>Computer.<br>3 - Computer |
| 19 | Elementary | Urban | 13 | 313 | 1 - Develop reading continuum.<br>Establish discipline code.<br>2 - Teamwork/communication.<br>Behavior management/Community relationships.<br>3 - Writing/Communication/Parent involvement |

or more of the teachers in each school observed improvements in knowledge, skills, communication, and participation in decision making. The two most commonly mentioned strengths of the program were (a) intensive involvement and responsibility for the planning of school activities, and (b) improved staff morale. SDSI programs were most successful when (a) activities were conducted during released-time, (b) when there were little staff turnover, and (c) when there was active district and principal support of the team's leadership role.

## LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The WSU's SDSI Program is based on the premise that classroom teachers can address their needs best by identifying their own priorities and planning collaboratively to meet those needs. The process, however, does not occur in a vacuum. The support of the building principal has long been recognized as a critical factor in staff development efforts (Berman and McLaughlin, 1976). The principals in our study contributed to success of the staff development model by:

*Participating on the building level planning team.

Involvement with the BLT during the initial meetings, is vital, since the principal generally serves as "procedural expert", letting the team know what is or is not possible, clarifying questions concerning policies, contracts, budgets, etc., serving as a catalyst in moving the team when things are bogged down. In addition to attending all meetings and acting as a regular member of the BLT, the principal also serves as the project's promotor, salesman, leader, gatekeeper and facilitator.

*Providing administrative support for staff development.

The principal often review and report on the activities and progress of the staff development project to the district's curriculum director thereby obtaining support at the central office level. The principal also assists the BLT in establishing a meeting scheduled with minimum conflict, with district-wide programs, scheduling meetings in which the BLT provides information to staff and solicits input from staff; ensures release time for teachers to participate in the project and provides adequate time for BLT to engage in planning and project monitoring by obtaining substitutes when needed. Finally, the principal can provide tangible and intangible rewards for participation and for progress made toward the goals of the project.

*Encouraging participation by all school staff.

The staff development process can be threatening. The principal should make sure that teachers feel comfortable by providing an open, trusting school climate. In schools where several different interest groups and factions exists, the principal ensures that everyone understands that the process is not designed to "fix" someone of some faction who has been bugging the principal. The project is designed to fix the school's needs.

*Providing opportunities for professional growth.

One of the most important tasks of the principal is that of creating awareness that the main goal of the staff development project is to encourage ongoing growth. Because one of the major sources of new ideas is other teachers, the principal should provide lots of opportunities for teachers to share their good ideas. In this way, when the funds are cut off, the "norm" of continual sharing and growth will remain.

The biggest lesson we can learn from the SDSI Program is that principals can be a powerful force for school change when they are flexible enough to allow teachers to take part in rational problem-solving and responsible, widely shared decision making. Boyer (1984) has concluded that one of the most powerful forces for the improvement of American education is the development of teachers' skills and feelings of power and professionalism. Staff Development for School Improvement offers a promising process for developing greater excellence in American schools.

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# RESUME

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## EDUCATION

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| 1972 | Ed. D., University of Tennessee<br>Knoxville, Tennessee |
| 1968 | M. Ed. Memphis State University<br>Memphis, Tennessee |
| 1966 | B. S. Memphis State University<br>Memphis, Tennessee |

## EMPLOYMENT

| | |
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| 1984-present | Associate Professor<br>College of Education<br>Department of Educational Administration<br>Wayne State University<br>Detroit, Michigan 48202 |
| 1980-1984 | Associate Professor and Coordinator<br>College of Education<br>Department of Educational Administration<br>Wayne State University<br>Detroit, Michigan 48202 |
| 1975 | Associate Professor<br>Wayne State University |
| 1972 | Assistant Professor<br>Wayne State University<br>Department of Educational Administration |
| 1970-1972 | Instructor, (Completing Doctoral Studies<br>University of Tennessee<br>Knoxville, Tennessee |

Burnis Hall

EMPLOYMENT (Continued)

1968-1970 Principal and Assistant Principal
Memphis City Schools
Memphis, Tennessee

1966-1968 Elementary and Junior High School Teacher
Memphis City Schools
Memphis, Tennessee

PUBLICATIONS

Journals

"Career Education: Models and Practice." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Second School Principals (December 1975).

"Involving the Community in Metrication." The American Metric Journal (May-June 1975).

School Research Newsletter, College of Education, Wayne State University, Co-editor, 1975-1976.

"Introducing Students in the Middle School to Metrication." Michigan Elementary School Principal Journal (Winter 1976).

"Community Involvement: An Essential Ingredient for Decentralization." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (1976).

"Decentralization: The Model of Detroit." Trends in Education, London, England (September 1976).

"Lay Advisory Council Attendance in a Decentralized School District." Secondary Education Today: Journal of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (Summer 1977).

"Here We Come, Ready or Not--Community Involvement in Teacher Collective Bargaining." Catalyst for Change (October 1978).

"Detroit Community Councils Take on the Problem of Police Presence in the Schools." Community Education Journal (March 1979).

"An Interview with Arthur Combs." Urban Educator, College of Education, Wayne State University (Spring 1981).

"Working with Community Advisory Councils: Key to Success in Urban Schools." Phi Delta Kappan (March 1982).

Burnis Hall

SCHOLARLY AWARDS

| | |
|---|---|
| 1971 | National Defense Graduate Fellowship |
| 1973 | A Plaque "In Appreciation for Service," from the National Center for Community Education. |
| 1975 | Listed in Who's Who Among Black Americans, First Edition. |
| 1977-78 | National Academy for School Executives Scholarship Award. |
| 1979-80 | Listed in Dictionary of International Biography, 1979-80 Edition. |
| May 1977 | Award for Outstanding Service, Wayne County Intermediate School District, Project Glasser. |
| 1980 | Certificate of Appreciation from Region One, Board of Education, Detroit Public Schools, contributions to School-Community Council Convention. |
| 1981 | Certificate of Appreciation, from the Business Education Alliance, Detroit Chapter of Commerce, January, 1981. |
| 1982 | "Outstanding Career Educator Award," Michigan Association for Career Education, September, 1982. |
| | "Honored Citizen Award" from the Detroit Public Schools, November, 1982. |

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

| | |
|---|---|
| AASA | American Association of School Administrators |
| BEA | Black Educators Association, Inc. |
| MASA | Michigan Association of School Administrators |
| ASCD | Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development |
| NCSEA | National Community School Education Association |
| NASSP | National Association of SEcondary School Principals |
| AAUP | American Association of University Professors |

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS (Continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| PDK | Phi Delta Kappa |
| NABSE | National Alliance of Black School Educators |
| MAPEA | Michigan Association of Professors of Educational Administration |
| MAPACE | Michigan Association of Public Adult and Community Education |
| MCSEA | Michigan Community School Education Association |
| MANWC | Michigan Association for Non-White Concerns |
| MDABSE | Metropolitan Detroit Alliance of Black School Educators |
| NABCE | National Alliance of Black Community Educators |